

CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1258, THE Truth in Caller ID Act

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Today the House considers H.R. 1258, the “Truth in Caller ID Act.”

This measure was introduced by our colleagues Mr. Engel and Mr. Barton, the Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. It would direct the Federal Communications Commission to prohibit caller ID “spoofing,” where a caller falsifies the original caller ID information during the transmission of a phone call with the intent to defraud or deceive.

Typically, caller ID spoofing involves a caller changing the number that would show on the call recipient’s caller ID when a call is placed. Spoofing has been possible for years but generally required expensive equipment to change the outgoing call information. With the growth of voice over IP, though, spoofing has become easier and less expensive, and a number of websites now offer spoofing services.

The proliferation of spoofing technologies and services means that those that want to deceive others by manipulating caller ID can do so with relative ease. Spoofing threatens a number of business applications, including credit card verification and automatic call routing, because these systems rely on the telephone number as identified by the caller ID system as one piece of their verification and authentication process.

At other times, however, spoofing may be used to protect individuals. For example, domestic violence shelters sometimes use spoofing to mask the identity of the caller for protective purposes.

By prohibiting the use of caller ID spoofing only where the intent is to defraud or to deceive, this measure will address nefarious uses of the technology while continuing to allow legitimate uses. In the domestic violence shelter example, there is no intent to cause harm, which is an element of the crime of deception. Therefore, using caller ID spoofing to protect the location of a victim of domestic violence is not deceptive and would be allowed under the bill before the House.

This measure has passed the House on the suspension calendar in the last two Congresses, and a similar measure has been approved by the Senate. I look forward to advancing it today. My thanks to Mr. Engel and Mr. Barton for their continued commitment to this matter and to all members who on a bipartisan basis have contributed to and supported this measure.

I urge approval of the bill and reserve the balance of my time.